

living men seemed to plunge into vice, luxury, and pleasure, so far as their means would allow. There were, however, a number of sects and religions in the Greco-Roman world that held extremely pessimistic views as to the worth of human life and of those things which men care for most. They renounced the ordinary standards of welfare and happiness, and sought welfare and happiness in merely denying the popular standards. The old world philosophies no longer commanded faith, and they seemed to be rejected with active hatred, not with mere indifferent unbelief. The poor and those who were forced to live by self-denial joined these sects of philosophy or religion. The age which saw extremes of luxury and vicious excess was also the age which saw great phenomena of ascetic philosophy and practice. Each school or tendency developed its own mores to treat the problems of life in its own way. An ascetic policy never is a primary product of the "ways" in which unreflecting men meet the facts of life. It is reflective and derived. It is a secondary stage of faith built on experience and reflection. It is, therefore, dogmatic. It must be sustained by faith in the fundamental pessimistic conviction. It never can be verified by experience. It purposely runs counter to all the sanctions which are possible in experience. If any one declares evil good and pain pleasure, he cannot find proof of it in any experiment. The mores produced out of asceticism are therefore peculiar and in many ways instructive.

673. Failure of the mores and revolt against expediency. We have seen that the mores are the results of the efforts of men to find out how to live under the conditions of human life so as

to satisfy interests and secure welfare. The efforts have been only very imperfectly successful. The task, in fact, never can be finished, for the conditions change and the problem contains different elements from time to time. Moreover, dogmas interfere. They dictate "duty" and "right" by authority and as virtue, quite independently of any verification by experience and expediency. All the primitive taboos express the convictions of men that there are things which must not be done, or must not be done beyond some limited degree, if the men would live well.